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PSCI 348.01: Multicultural Politics in the United States

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PSCI 348 – MULTICULTURAL POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES

Spring 2016

T-TH 2:10 – 3:30, JRH 202

Draft Syllabus – To Be Revised

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Many of the most controversial political issues during the past three decades in the United States have engaged basic issues regarding how the U.S. deals with its diverse population. These issues have often been described as “multicultural” in nature because they involve differences among the many and diverse social groups in the U.S. and the groups’ different values, beliefs, and experiences. Multicultural issues engage a wide range of basic questions about what the U.S. is and what it should be, such as what it means to be American, who should be included in the American “community,” what the relationship between the nation and its citizens should be, and the role of social groups in American political, economic, and social life. Each of these potential conflicts raises key questions about the nature of American society, what direction society should take in the 21st century, and how government policy should be shaped to achieve the ideal society – and most fundamentally what the ideal society is. In this course we will explore some of the main controversies over multicultural politics, the basic ideas and concepts that have been used to try to understand and think about what the U.S. is and what it should be, and the tradeoffs (costs and benefits) associated with the various policies and points of view.

Multicultural politics is a broad topic with far reaching implications, but because this course (like all courses) is limited in scope by the constraints of time, we will focus on the topics of national community, identity, immigration and assimilation, and race and ethnicity, in the U.S. While many aspects of multicultural politics, such as gender politics, the politics of sexual preference, the politics of disability, the politics of religion, multicultural politics in other countries, and others are important, we will examine those topics primarily when they provide us with a better understanding of the main issues covered in this course. However, these issues can be explored more intensively in your research paper for this course, so if you start thinking and making notes about topics you’re interested in researching and writing about.

The course is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with different interpretations of what multiculturalism is and how the term has been used, and basic issues relating to how America is defined – such as what it means to be a nation, how citizenship is defined, and the politics of immigration and assimilation. The second section focuses on the politics of race and ethnicity, examining civil rights, voting rights, affirmative action, segregation and property, and educational issues. The experiences of other social groups are incorporated to provide points of comparison.

READINGS:

There is no single textbook for this course. We will use a variety of articles and book chapters to explore the course topics. All readings will be on Moodle. I will change the reading list as new material becomes available, and in response to student interests.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This course will cover a wide range of topics from several different perspectives, so it is essential that you keep up with the reading for each day's class. Some of the readings are theoretical, dense and complex, and assume that you have a good understanding of the history and functioning of the U.S. political system and of current political controversies. There are no formal prerequisites for the course beyond junior standing, but students who have not taken an introductory course in American Government or American History will have to work hard to keep up with the class.

Daily attendance and participation are essential. The class lectures will include material not in the course readings, material that is essential in order to place the readings in context and understand their interconnections. We will discuss the lectures and readings, and 5% of your course grade will be based on class discussion. In order for discussion to be fruitful for us as a class, you will have to be up to date on the lectures and readings. Asking questions is one of the key elements of learning, so when the readings, lectures, or discussions seem baffling, unclear, or interesting, ask questions about them! Respect for others' viewpoints is a crucial part of engaging the ideas in this course, and listening and responding to others respectfully will contribute to interesting and thought-provoking discussions for all of us.

To encourage you to read and think about the course readings and to facilitate discussion, there will be five or more unscheduled in-class written reflections on the readings. These written reflections are worth a total of 5% of the course grade, and cannot be made up if you are absent from or late to class that day.

There may also be at least one short paper, that will count as no more than 5% of the course grade. If there are none, the research paper will count for 30% of the course grade.

There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. The final will be comprehensive but weighted toward the material in the second half of the course. You are responsible for both the lectures and assigned readings on the exams, both of which are written exams with primarily short answer and essay questions.

There will be one research paper of approximately 8-10 pages in length. It will give you an opportunity to do original research, broadening your knowledge and developing your own analysis of a current political issue related to multiculturalism. The specific requirements of the paper will be provided later in class. You should begin thinking now about topics that interest you, and make notes as ideas occur to you.

GRADES will be assigned according to the following percentages:

A = 93-100	B+ = 87-89.9	C+ = 77-79.9	D+ = 67-69.9	below 60=F
A- = 90-92.9	B = 83-86.9	C = 73-76.9	D = 63-66.9	
	B- = 80-82.9	C- = 70-72.9	D- = 60-62.9	

Written Reading Reflections	5% of grade
Discussion Participation	5% of grade
In-class assignment	5% of grade
Midterm exam	25% of grade
Research paper (8-10 pages)	25% of grade (30% if no in-class assignments)
Final exam	35% of grade

Both of the exams and the research paper must be completed in order to pass this course.

PSCI 400:

Undergraduate students taking the 1-credit PSC 400 Advanced Writing course will write a 2-page research proposal and complete a first draft of the research paper, both of which I will provide comments on. Based on the draft comments students will revise the paper into final form. The final version of the paper will be 12-15 pages instead of 8-10, and graded on writing clarity and organization, as well as content. First drafts will be due one week before the paper due date for the rest of the class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php

The University of Montana Student Conduct Code prohibits plagiarism, which is “representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own.” This is a serious academic violation that can result in penalties up to suspension or expulsion from the University. **I take academic honesty very seriously, and will do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating in this course.** Read the UM plagiarism warning <http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/acadpolicy/default.html> and Student Conduct Code above. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

CLASS COURTESY:

In order to have a pleasant and effective learning environment in a class this size, we need to observe a few basic courtesies. This is a small campus, so it is possible to get to the classroom on time from all other campus buildings; arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class and disturbs other students and the instructor. Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. Please don’t read a newspaper or other non-course material, eat during class, or use text messaging, web browsers, or similar communications. If you have a question or comment about the material, please raise your hand instead of discussing it with your neighbor. We’ll all benefit if we just keep in mind the reason we’re in the room together.

DROP POLICY AND INCOMPLETES:

You can drop on Cyberbear through February 12th, and after that until March 28th using a drop slip signed by me. Starting March 29th, you must go through the more formal and difficult “late drop” petition process. I will sign late drop petitions until May 1st, and after that only under extraordinary circumstances, as stated at <http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/acadpolicy/default.html> under “Forty sixth Instructional Day...”

Incompletes will only be granted when all the conditions set forth in the official University policy are met – see <http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/acadpolicy/default.html> under “Incomplete Grade Policy”

DSS STUDENTS:

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide me with a letter of approval for accommodations. DSS is in Lommasson Center 154.

E-MAIL AND MOODLE:

Every registered UM student has an official UM e-mail account, and students registered for this course have a Moodle course account. I may use your official UM e-mail to send you important announcements, and your exam and research paper grades will be posted on Moodle. See <http://umonline.umt.edu/> for instructions on how to access your UM e-mail and Moodle accounts.

GRADUATE STUDENT REQUIREMENTS Graduate students taking this course must complete additional graduate-level readings and a written analysis for each course topic as specified by the instructor, and must complete a 20-25 page research paper consisting of a research design and hypothesis, original analysis, an extensive literature review, and an analysis that synthesizes the three components.

COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

January 26 -28	Introduction: What is Multiculturalism and Why is it Controversial?
February 2-9	Definitions, History, and Philosophies
February 11-18	Unity and Diversity: Differing Concepts of the Nation and Nationalism
Feb 23 - March 1	Individuals and Groups: Identification and Identity Politics
March 3-8	Immigration, Immigrants, and Immigration Policy
March 10-15	Assimilation
MIDTERM EXAM:	THURSDAY, MARCH 17 (TENTATIVE DATE)
March 22-24	Racial and Ethnic Politics: Policy Formation and Policy Change
March 29-31	Representation, Voting Rights, and Redistricting Policy
April 4 – 8 - NO CLASSES DUE TO SPRING BREAK	
April 12-14	Affirmative Action Policy
April 19-21	School and Residential Desegregation
April 26-28	Multiculturalism in Education Policy (if time permits)
May 3-5	<i>E Pluribus Unum?</i> Unity, Diversity, and Multiculturalism
FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, MAY 9, 1:10 – 3:10 pm	